

Testimony on HB 645
Implementing the Receipt and Appropriation of Federal Stimulus Funds
Health and Human Services Joint Appropriations Subcommittee, Room 303
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For the record, my name is Robert Buzzas and I am the executive director of the Montana HRDC Directors Association.

Montana's ten Human Resource Development Councils provide an array of programs that cover the entire state to help low-income individuals and families become self-sustaining and productive members of their community. HRDCs are community-based, nonprofit organizations that work through partnerships with government, private entities and other nonprofit organizations.

There are three formula grants in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act that HRDCs have implemented as far back as the mid 1970s—those are Weatherization Program, the Emergency Shelter Grants and the Community Services Block Grant.

HRDCs, in conjunction with the DPHHS, are committed to using these funds effectively, successfully and timely and we've been working since December to develop the plans to so. Using Results Oriented Management and Accountability, (ROMA), performance will be benchmarked, measured and assessed.

We are using well established structures, processes and partnerships to ensure that plans are tailored to meet the particular needs and opportunities in each community.

This starts with the tripartite boards that govern every agency meaning that each board is comprised of elected local officials, local business leaders and low-income citizens. The planning continues with the many local partners HRDCs have worked with for decades to determine the local priorities and shape the delivery of local programs.

For example, ESG funds support many local partners, including emergency shelters and others working to prevent homelessness. HRDCs retain only a small percent of these funds for such things as emergency rent payments to prevent evictions or emergency hotel vouchers for homeless or displaced families.

The Weatherization stimulus funding is particularly large, but so is the need. To ensure that these funds are spent out effectively and within a very short time frame, HRDCs began meeting with DPHHS officials in December and have been formulating local plans for the ramping up—as well as ramping down—since then.

There are some significant challenges ahead, but we are ready. We urge you to authorize these funds as soon as possible. Thankyou